

Mount Holyoke College Class of 1964  
*After the Middle Ages Comes the Renaissance!*  
Special Topics

## Life Transitions

When Rosalie [Sally] Hackley Anders requested login information for our website, she commented that she was pondering whether or not to retire. As co-scribe I asked her if she would be willing to write more about what factors she is considering as she makes her decision. This is her thoughtful response:

Like a lot of people our age, I am wrestling with the idea of retiring, in my case from a job I love as an environmental planner for the City of Cambridge. Of course everyone's situation is different, but many of us may have similar questions. Here are some of mine.

What purpose will my life have? Without my paid work, which involves issues that I care passionately about, will my life have real meaning?

And yet, isn't it better to give someone else a chance-someone with fresh energy, new ideas? There are lots of great people out there who'd love to have my job.

Can I/should I structure my days when I retire? The days that I go to work tend to be the days when I fit in all kinds of other stuff as well-tai chi, errands, lunch with friends. Sometimes it seems that the less time I have the more I get done. Without work, will I feel as if I'm just drifting through my days? Is that okay? Is it time to let go of the to-do lists that dominate my life? Why is that scary?

Will I have enough close connections with people? Now, at work, I connect with people all day long. I will have my self-employed, pretty-much-retired husband, but I know I'll need other people. So much of family and so many friends are far away.

I try to squeeze in some art-making now, but will it be as satisfying when I can do a lot more of it? Will all my hobbies be as interesting when they make up more of my day?

Will I have enough money? Senior discounts are great, but our expenses are likely to increase- the time for hearing aids is at hand, for example-and with the long-term problems of the U.S. economy our savings suddenly seem vulnerable.

I live and work in the same neighborhood and am bound to run into former colleagues often. And, I will no doubt keep working on climate issues in some way. How will retirement affect my relationships with the people I now see all day? Will I become a nuisance, stopping in too often, or will I avoid my workplace inappropriately? Will my volunteer organizing ideas prove realistic or are they just semi-delusional fantasies about what I'll achieve once I retire?

Now, in my position with the City, I have a bit of status in the community. How will I feel when that is gone? How much have I relied on it to make myself feel important and, as long as I'm still working, not old?

Won't it be fun to just decide it's a beautiful day and head off to a park? Or that it's a perfect rainy day for a museum or a matinee? How about occasionally hanging out in a coffee shop or the library?

Am I over-analyzing the whole thing?

Added: 12/12/11